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Security Information*Office Memorandum* • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

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TO :

DATE: 12 September 1952

FROM :

SUBJECT: Comment on Southeast Asia Area Program

1. Type of program. By Type of Program, I presume it is meant that a group of selected specialists, each in a particular discipline, lecture, discuss or present material and develop it over a stated course, inviting wide discussion. I can think of no better type of program for analysts, but I am sure the program as presented in R & S building could have been better planned. Each lecturer was too much on his own so the coordination was bad. Consequently there was duplication. Of course it is well to have differing views on the same topic but not this way. Then the development of material was terribly uneven as between the various lecturers: though each lecturer did a fair job considering the rather stringent time limitations. Also ~~some~~ some lecturers assumed lower teaching level than others. So the whole effect came out rather haphazard which vitiated the good and did not produce as lasting an impression. I have no vital criticism of the lecturers, each of whom I liked. Someone with a fair knowledge of the area should have planned the course in the closest cooperation with the lecturers at least three or four weeks before it began. I venture to suggest a plan along the following lines, for instance:

THE BASIC DATA - at least two weeks, with lectures in this order:
Geographical, Cultural, Political and Economic. (can run simultaneously as in the course as given)

This would include the ~~elements~~, and so [] would not start off with problems of population and end up with []

[] would come through with a complete outline; []
[] I speak on other economic data besides trade; []
[] would postpone the history of Buddhism till

later.

GENERAL PROBLEMS OF THE AREA - at least two weeks.

U.S. INTERESTS AND PROBLEMS IN THE AREA AND SUGGESTIONS
FOR COPING WITH THEM - at least one week.

Suggestions for presentation are made below under that heading.

2. I feel that this particular program was useful to me. It was very helpful, indeed, on the basis that I have much to learn from the specialists and I did learn a great deal.

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3. a. Content and scope of subject matter. For this area, background is particularly important. Not enough is known even by specialists, the problems are deep-rooted, and the motivations of peoples and governments are inadequately known. As to presentation of data by the lecture system, I am of this mind: I already knew at least a third or more of what was given in class. In such a short time it is impossible to give many facts by this method. Reading is essential. Therefore reading of certain carefully-selected books should be required. If some wish to take the course without reading (because of lack of time) they will not get as much out of it. But the lectures should be more of a refresher and outline to guide and stimulate reading. This method would help even-up the student level: those who have read the basic books could refresh themselves, and those who have missed some could dig in.
- b. Presentation. In connection with my discussion in (1) above I suggest these improvements and methods:
 1. Better correlation of lectures.
 2. A seminar or panel with all lecturers present at least once a week (in addition to the lectures) on programmed topics.
 3. Regular discussion periods announced in advance and discussion better guided.
 4. Papers to be prepared by students who wish to do so.
- c. Time allotted for course. The number of weeks were inadequate. I have suggested five weeks above. Even six would be better. But I would not lengthen the course for the purpose of loading in more material. The time is best spent in discussion of problems. Problems are of the essence of the value of an area study. Too strict a division by disciplines or too-great emphasis on substantive study is artificial.
- d. The lecturers tried to give room for discussion and within the time limitations they succeeded as best they could. The second part of the question is already answered.
4. As to reading, I do not see how anyone can benefit without preparing himself to understand the lecturers or the area. I would put it on this plane, and have it well-understood that the student is wasting his time and Government money unless he takes the course seriously. Preparing papers is another matter. It should be encouraged and there will always be a number who wish to do so along lines ^{in which} they are particularly versed. To do so under guidance would be a fine ~~program~~ opportunity for them.

I wish to call attention to my previous memorandum on the physical arrangements. Interest sagged terribly and the classes got down to five or six on the hottest days out of well over 30 at the start. The same interest and seriousness should be given to area courses as to other parts of the ~~program~~ training program.